

**“US GRANTS \$34.7 MILLION FOR HEALTH AND
EDUCATION PROJECTS IN CAMBODIA”
REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED STATES,
CHARLES A. RAY ON SIGNING CEREMONY
THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2005**

Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: It is very gratifying to participate in this ceremony that obligates \$34.7 million in USAID grant funds for Cambodia's health and education sectors.

In fact, signing up grant funds is one of the most enjoyable things that any Ambassador can do!

This particular signing is notable for a number of reasons.

First, these agreements are only the first in a series of obligations that will bring the level of USAID assistance to Cambodia this year to \$55 million.

Second, this marks the second consecutive year in which USAID assistance levels to Cambodia will reach \$55 million - the highest for Cambodia in more than a decade and considerably more than the \$29 million provided in 2001 or the \$39 million provided in 2002 and again in 2003.

Third, these two grant agreements will fund a series of activities that underscore the depth of our partnership while also emphasizing issues that directly affect every Cambodian - health and education.

More than half the USAID program is devoted to health. Specifically with regard to HIV/AIDS, the US is the largest single donor in Cambodia. And, I am happy to note, significant progress is being made. HIV/AIDS prevalency rates in Cambodia have declined by one-thirds – from more than 3 percent to less than 2 percent – in the last five years.

Recently, Kofi Anan, Secretary General of the United Nations, listed Cambodia among a few countries world-wide that are effectively addressing HIV/AIDS concerns. Other countries in Asia and beyond are watching what is happening in Cambodia with interest and appreciation.

With respect to basic education, our involvement is more recent and more modest. Nonetheless, the \$6 million provided under this grant agreement will have an important impact, both in terms of improving the quality of education and increasing access to it. Again, we are gratified that we can be part of this partnership that is so vital in shaping the future of a new generation of Cambodians.

Finally, I must note that this will be the last assistance agreement that I will sign during my tour of duty in Cambodia.

During my time here, I have been privileged to participate in several such events. More importantly, I have been able to witness in my visits to all the provinces of Cambodia something of the impact that these programs can have in the lives of real people. Better health facilities and improved classrooms are important – and our programs are helping to bring this about. The quality and skills of the teachers and health workers that make these facilities work are just important. Here too, US assistance programs play a vital part in partnership with their Cambodian counterparts.

Once again, let me thank you for the privilege of participating in this program. Let me also wish both my Cambodian and USAID colleagues every success in implementing the programs that will be funded as a result of the agreements that we have just signed today.